



ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2015

TO OUR FELLOW MARYLANDERS

We are pleased to present our Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Report. We are continuing our work to improve the quality of life in rural Maryland and are excited to report how our work is making an impact.

THANKS TO GOVERNOR HOGAN AND THE MARYLAND LEGISLATURE

The Rural Maryland Council thanks Governor Larry Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly for their continued support of the Rural Maryland Council. In Fiscal Year 2015, the Council received \$167,000 in General Fund revenues for operating support. We also received \$167,000 for the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF). We would not be able to meet our mission without this important state funding.

THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

In Fiscal Year 2015, the Council:

- Increased our advocacy work by hosting a Welcome Breakfast for New Rural Legislators and organized a Rural Maryland Day at the Maryland Legislature;
- Conducted the first phase of a Youth Engagement and Assessment Initiative in partnership with the Upper Shore Regional Council and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship;
- Helped organize regional meetings of community development entities;
- Resumed activities of the Health Care Committee;
- Filmed and distributed a short video recognizing the Aspirations of Rural Maryland.

LOOKING AHEAD

We continue our rebuilding activities with the resumption of the Health Care Committee. Following up on the previous work of the Joint Planning and Development Committee, we will begin work to target Council activity and create strategic priorities and partnerships. We expect this work to develop into a long-term strategic plan. With the filming and distribution of our "Rural Aspirations" video, the Rural Maryland Foundation will host a screening of the movie "Farmland" at the Chesapeake Film Festival. We are also planning to host the biannual Rural Summit to discuss the challenges of rural Maryland.

As always, we welcome your involvement and participation. All meetings and activities are open to the public. We invite you to join us in making all of Maryland the best place to live, work and play.



Scott Warner
Chair



Charlotte Davis
Executive Director

Cover photo: The Inn at Huntingfield Creek, Rock Hall, Maryland

WHO WE ARE

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) brings together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of rural Maryland. The RMC is an independent state agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a holistic way the special needs and opportunities in rural Maryland.

OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Enable citizens in rural communities to achieve success in employment and have access to quality, affordable health care, and other services;
- Preserve agriculture and other natural resource-based industry as an integral part of Maryland's rural economy and culture;
- Advocate for a manageable regulatory process, and reasonable and effective compliance; and
- Address the impact of changing conditions on the environment, heritage and economic well-being of rural Maryland.

As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner. Policy-makers and managers from stakeholder agencies and organizations at all levels of government and the private sector are valued participants.

The vision for the RMC is the ultimate realization that citizens living in rural communities are achieving success in education and employment, have access to affordable, quality health care and other vital public services, and live in an environment where natural and cultural resources are being sustained for future generations.

RMC OFFICERS

Chair: Mr. Scott Warner, Executive Director, Mid-Shore Regional Council

First Vice Chair: Ms. Doris Mason, Executive Director, Upper Shore Regional Council

Second Vice Chair: Mr. Josh Hastings, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Immediate Past Chair: Mr. Michael Pennington, Executive Director, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore



Governor Larry Hogan speaking before the Council on August 20, 2014

RMC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rodney Glotfelty, District 1 – Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties

Angela Spencer, District 2 – Carroll, Frederick and Hartford Counties

Donna Sasscer, District 3 – Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Loretta Lodge, District 4 – Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties

Josh Hastings, District 5 – Caroline, Dorchester and Talbot Counties

Erroll Mattox, District 6 – Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties

R. Kevin Brooks, District 7 – Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard and Montgomery Counties

Mike Thielke, Nonprofit Organization

Ronald Studds, For Profit Organizations

Ken Korando, At-Large

David Smith, Maryland Municipal League (MML)

The Honorable Perry Stutman, Maryland Municipal League (MML)

Matt Tefteau, Maryland Farm Bureau

Sharan Marshall, Maryland Assn of Public Library Admin

Santo Grande, Maryland Association of Community Action Agencies

Earl Hance, Governor's Representative

S. Pat McMillan, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Greg Cole, Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED)

Temi Oshiyoye, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH)

Carol Gilbert, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Emily Wilson, Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

John Hartline, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

Leanne Mazer, Tri-County Council for Western Maryland

Craig Hartsock, Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council

Dr. Stephen Wright, University of Maryland Extension

Steve McHenry, Rural Maryland Foundation

Dr. William McGowan, USDA Rural Development



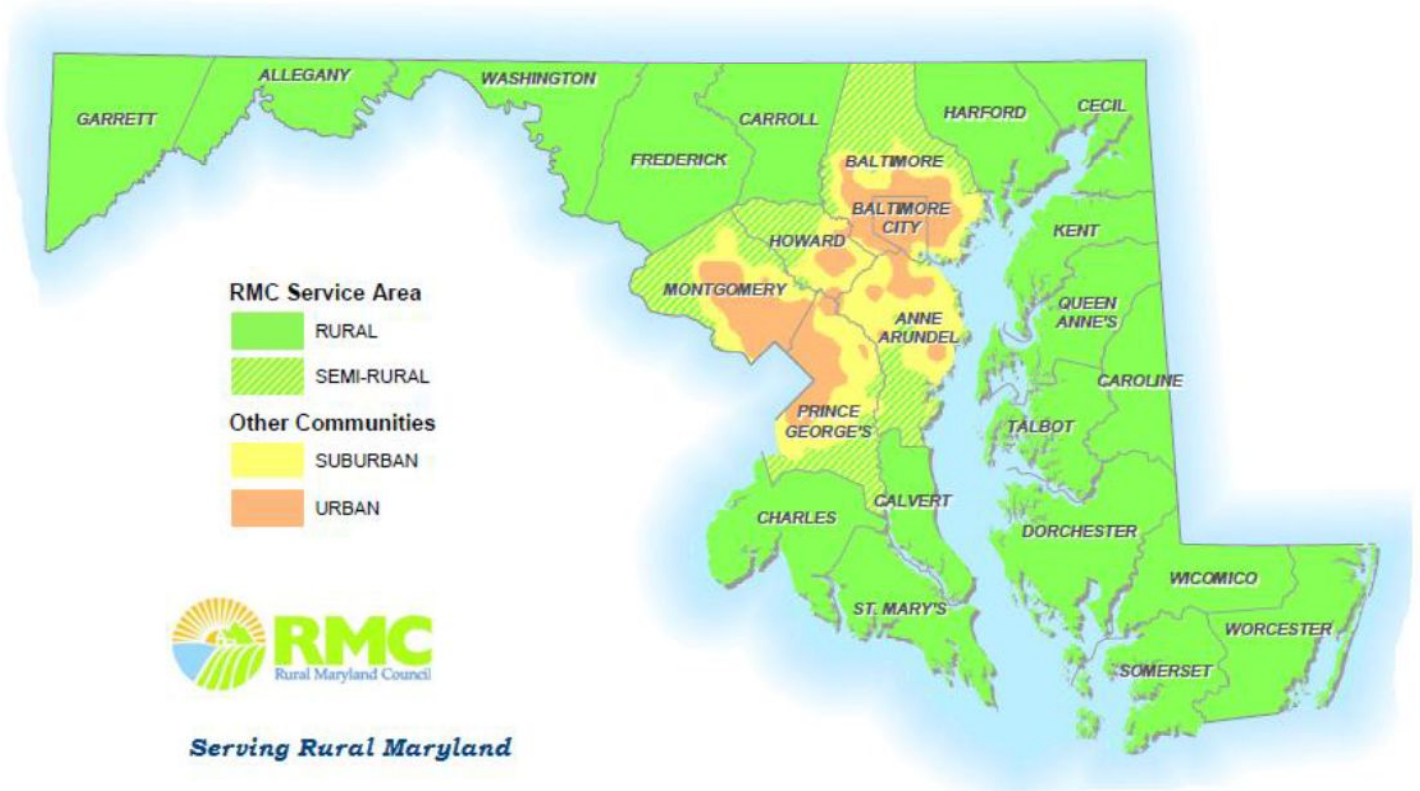
The Council meets at its April 10, 2015 Executive Board meeting in the Miller Senate Building in Annapolis

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural jurisdictions share common characteristics that set them apart from their suburban and urban counterparts, such as geographic isolation, lack of transportation, and lack of access to and availability of health care. The State definition of rural is articulated in the Annotated Code of Maryland and includes 18 of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. Each is represented on the Rural Maryland Council.

THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES CONSTITUTE RURAL MARYLAND:

Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, St. Mary's, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico and Worcester.



PARTNERSHIP WITH VOLUNTEER MARYLAND

Volunteer Maryland builds stronger, healthier communities by developing volunteer programs with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and schools. As part of the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism, Volunteer Maryland administers an AmeriCorps service training program. Building a partnership together focusing on rural communities seemed a natural fit. Together, during Fiscal Year 2015, the two organizations conducted ten information sessions throughout the State. Attendees learned more about both organizations and the resources available to rural-serving organizations.

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL ORGANIZING OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

In partnership with Community Development Network of Maryland (CD Network), the State's association of community development organizations, the RMC sponsored and supported regional meetings throughout the State. The purpose of these coalitions is to understand capacity building and training needs, provide resources to meet those needs, to understand common issues in each region, and work with the coalitions to resolve those issues. The Eastern Shore regional coalition, hosted by Delmarva Community Services, held its first meeting on May 6, 2015. The Southern Maryland region met twice, March 16, 2015 and September 23, 2014 at the College of Southern Maryland. Western Maryland met on February 13, 2015. We hope to continue to build on these initial meetings to better meet the needs of the community.

SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The need for new ventures and their ability to generate new jobs is something on which everyone can agree. One mean of achieving that grand goal is organizing an annual business plan competition. The Eastern Shore Business Competition is designed to advance and expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Currently in its third year, the event is organized by the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center with sponsorship by the Rural Maryland Council and the Maryland Capital Enterprises. This year the winner of the Eastern Shore Business Plan Competition was Nuvu of Mount Airy. Currently in-development, Nuvu's mobile app is being designed to provide information on nearby events, general demographics (gender breakdown, age ranges, etc.) of people at particular bars, and allow connections with friends old and new. The app – free to users, with revenue coming from businesses – will provide a wide array of information, virtually instantly. Nuvu's prize included \$25,000 in cash and a \$2,000 per month discount from the Rackspace Startup Program for the next year.

The Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center and the Rural Maryland Council were also pleased to announce Nuvu as the winner of the 2015 Best Rural Entrepreneur Award as part of the 2015 InvestMaryland Challenge. The InvestMaryland Challenge is a national seed and early-stage business competition hosted by the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. The Challenge awarded \$400,000 in grants and a host of business services to companies in the life sciences and high tech industries. In offering a Rural Entrepreneur Award, the Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center and the RMC make this award to advance and expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem throughout Maryland, and collaborate to execute a business competition that will draw greater attention to our rural communities and attract entrepreneurs to the opportunities and resources available in the region.

RMC HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

The Health Care Working Committee has been active in the past, focusing on health workforce shortage issues. A separate Telehealth Working Committee was created in 2009 as a result of a Rural Health Roundtable discussion which investigated the need for a statewide telehealth consortium. The Committee developed a survey of telehealth providers and receivers in Maryland implemented by the Upper Shore Regional Council and funded by a Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) grant award.

Beginning with the new year, the Council resumed meetings of the Health Care Committee. Invitations were sent to prospective members and the first meeting was held on March 25, 2015. The Committee will identify priorities of medical needs with a special focus on rural Maryland. The Committee has been meeting monthly and has heard from guest speakers.

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF RURAL MARYLAND

With the gubernatorial election in 2014, the Maryland General Assembly saw a large number of new freshmen legislators and a new administration. During this time, the RMC worked to advance its legislative priorities and increase our visibility with legislators. New activities included hosting a welcome breakfast for new rural legislators on January 29, 2015 and organizing “Rural Maryland Day” in Annapolis held on February 19, 2015.

Results of our activities were reported in a legislative review developed by the RMC Legislative Committee. The Committee met biweekly during the legislative session to discuss bills and met over the interim to develop legislative priorities. For the 2015 Session, the Committee was active in supporting the budget requests for the RMC, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), and the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPPIF). Other efforts supported the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) which was targeted for cuts by the Maryland Department of Budget and Management and by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services, but was ultimately level funded at \$2,875,000. Several additional years of mandated appropriations were added into statute through the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act.

Also during to 2015 Legislative Session, the Maryland General Assembly passed a proposal to expand the scope of practice of nurse practitioners. The RMC submitted joint testimony with the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) in support of House Bill 999 - Certified Nurse Practitioners - Authority to Practice. This legislation repeals the prohibition against a certified nurse practitioner practicing in the State without an approved attestation and instead requires an applicant for initial certification as a nurse practitioner to identify on his or her application to board of nursing a licensed physician or certified nurse practitioner mentor who will consult and collaborate with the applicant. This will help improve access to health care in rural areas.

RMC also supported proposals that promoted viable agriculture, forestry and rural communities. We advocated for funding for important land preservation programs with the budget committees approving funding for:

- Program Open Space-Stateside-\$21,602,750
- Program Open Space-Local-\$30,134,900
- Rural Legacy-\$9,370,500
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation-\$17,044,500

We supported expanding tax credits for community investment and locally generated renewable energy. The Executive Director testified in support of HB 636/SB 154 - Renewable Portfolio Standard – Thermal Energy. This legislation created a 2% thermal energy tier that would include woody biomass, geothermal heating and cooling systems, and animal manure systems.

During the 2015 legislative session, we supported several economic development proposals. The Executive Director testified in support of SB 196/HB 1089 – Rural Economic Development Program and One Maryland Tax Credit. This measure would have established the rural economic development program, under which qualified businesses in rural counties would be eligible for ten years of property, income, and sales tax benefits. We also supported SB 507 – Maryland Strong Manufacturing Development Act. This bill provided for local personal and real property tax credits, an income tax credit, and an exemption of state income taxes of

SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES

the qualified wages and salaries paid to employees employed by new or expanding manufacturing entities within a manufacturing development zone. The RMC worked to expand the bill to include wood manufacturing. With the implementation of the Augustine Commission recommendations, all economic development proposals were deferred.

To protect local roadway infrastructure, funding for local governments was included in an early supplemental budget submitted by the governor and approved by the legislature. Maryland municipalities will receive \$19 million in Fiscal Year 2016; county governments will receive \$4 million.



Boat Marina, Ewell, Smith Island

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

Established in 2000, the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) offers important financial support to rural-serving nonprofit organizations that promote statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, and agricultural and forestry education efforts. The Fund also provides targeted financial assistance to community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses through enhanced training and technical assistance offerings.

During Fiscal Year 2015, a total of 54 rural-serving organizations submitted applications requesting more than \$1,000,000 in grants. This year, however, only \$170,000 was available; this was distributed to 17 rural-serving nonprofits. The recipients were:

ADKINS ARBORETUM, LTD: \$6,850

Through funding from MAERDAF, Adkins Arboretum was able to hire a seasonal, part-time education instructor to assist the Youth Program Coordinator during the busy fall and spring seasons. MAERDAF funding was also used to purchase much-needed supplies for youth programs. In the fall of 2014, 425 public and private school students participated in the Arboretum's youth programs. Another fifteen homeschool students took part in the eight-week "Science of Weather" program. Two scout groups earned forestry and naturalist badges at the Arboretum. Through all of these programs, Adkins Arboretum was able to continue its commitment to educating teachers and students in pre-k through 12th grade about the importance of native landscapes and to encourage the next generation of Chesapeake Bay stewards to enhance the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its communities.

In addition to covering instructor and supply expenses, MAERDAF funding was used for the maintenance of the Arboretum's two outdoor classrooms, Paw Paw Playground and the Funshine Garden. Many of the Arboretum's youth education programs make use of these locations.

CAROLINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION: \$11,504

The Caroline Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) received a MAERDAF grant in the amount of \$11,504 to market the Eastern Shore to new farmers. The project specifically targets value-added producers as these types of farms tend to employ more people per acre and also retain more profits locally. A logo, style guide and website were created (MarylandFarming.com). A promotional infographic was created and is now available on the website. Maryland Farming Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest accounts were established. Web ads and e-newsletter ads ran for four months on ModernFarmer.com. A print ad ran in the June 30 issue of *The New Jersey Farm*. As a result, three potential new farmers and businesses are working with local realtors to explore launching on the Eastern Shore.



MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

CHESAPEAKE MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER, INC.: \$10,000

The Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center (ChesMRC) worked on four goals: expanding outreach and engagement of non-English speaking community members on the Eastern Shore, increasing the number of driver's licenses obtained by recent immigrants, assisting pregnant women and new mothers, and building partnerships in other counties to expand services to other rural areas. For the first goal, ChesMRC increased its client base from 570 to 982 clients, an increase of 72%, with 59 clients from Caroline County, 38 clients from Dorchester County, eight clients from Kent County, 43 clients from Queen Anne's County, one client from Worcester, one client from Wicomico, and 832 clients from Talbot County. The number of services provided by ChesMRC in this time period was 1,354. ChesMRC assisted 258 community members in applying for a Maryland Driver's License which met their objective of 200. Of those community members, 158 have obtained permits and 57 of those receiving a permit received their driver's license.

COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND FOUNDATION: \$11,500

Through this funding opportunity, the Small Business Development Center of the College of Southern Maryland sought to provide additional training opportunities to businesses in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties, increase face to face consultations and training enrollments, and expand outreach to increase business awareness of training and counseling services. The College improved access to resources and services through the acquisition of [Go to Webinar](#) and, as a result, increased the number of trainings offered from 66 to 73, an increase of 11%.

CROSSROADS COMMUNITY, INC.: \$4,875

Crossroads Community, Inc. successfully applied for a National Service AmeriCorps placement through Volunteer Maryland. One hundred

percent of the MAERDAF grant award was used towards the Volunteer Maryland Coordinator living stipend. The volunteer coordinator recruited volunteers to help transport behavioral health patients to preventative or primary health care serving 30 older adults and individuals with disabilities.

EASTERN SHORE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER: \$14,923

This scope of work funded the ShoreVenture Program, a 10-week entrepreneur training program which was offered at Chesapeake College and Wor-Wic Community College. As a result of this training, five new businesses and 11 new jobs were created.

ENCHANTED HAVEN HORSE RESCUE: \$8,000

The MAERDAF grant was used to aid Enchanted Haven Horse Rescue (EHHR) in the expansion of existing and implementation of new programs in 2015. With the MAERDAF funds provided, this organization was able to purchase classroom equipment, complete their website, and MAERDAF funds assisted the purchase of a trailer to house new classrooms. They completed ten, 8-week groups with six children in each group (total of 64 children served). The after-school enrichments program also served 50 students. EHHR is now recognized as a certified facility through the Maryland Education Foundation, Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance, Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH), and the Maryland Horse Industry Board.

EVERGREEN HERITAGE CENTER FOUNDATION, INC.: \$23,500

Western Maryland's rural counties need to increase the earning capacity of their residents. To address that need, the Evergreen Heritage Center (EHC) Foundation and its partners offer hands-on STEM education (science, technology, engineering, and math) that can provide the knowledge and

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

skills necessary to compete in today's job market. The EHC Foundation also provides training in two specific STEM careers, agriculture and forestry, due to the critical need for and impact of these two industries.

The EHC Foundation's STEM Outdoor Learning Pavilion is a versatile 600 square foot "green" outdoor classroom that functions completely off-the-grid. This hand-made, timber frame Pavilion was built using logs harvested from the EHC and milled in the Heritage Wood Shop. The Pavilion's "green" design incorporates the use of solar energy to power pavilion lighting, supports the collection of rain water for field use, and uses self-contained composting restrooms. In addition, the Project itself has supported experiential learning for 1,794 students during their 2014-15 EHC field trips, i.e. Allegany County Public School (ACPS) third graders have been studying the use of composting for recycling waste, seventh graders have been learning how to conserve water by collecting and re-using rain water, high school Earth Science students have been investigating the Pavilion's use of alternative energy solutions, and high school Environmental Science students have been discovering the benefits of using locally harvested and milled lumber. The Project also involved 220 college students including recreation students who provided input for the Pavilion design, forestry and ethnobotany students who helped mill the Pavilion's lumber and build the structure, an ethnobotany intern who developed educational materials on its "green" technology and practices, education students who compiled "green" reference materials for visiting teachers, and advertising students who developed materials for promotion of the Project.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY CHOPTANK: \$6,150

From the marketing plan proposal, Habitat Choptank prioritized the following strategies based on needs and available funds:

- Website redesign (visit www.HabitatChoptank.org)
- Home buyer recruitment rack card
- Video library of home owner interviews – from this collection, video is being edited for a TV commercial, video for the website, and testimonials for community presentations. (sample at: <https://vimeo.com/132873084> password: home)

While working with the marketing firm in this report period, Habitat Choptank also employed two new strategies for home buyer recruitment:

- 'Just Sold' postcard – general household mailing around area of recently sold Habitat home at 501 Edgewood Avenue. The first mailing was in January 2015 for the new construction home.
- Saturday 'Open House' – opportunity for community members to tour a nearly completed home. First open house took place in February 2015 at the rehab house at 832 Fairmount.

These strategies were very productive, generating 52 inquiries about the home ownership program.

LEAD MARYLAND FOUNDATION: \$10,000

The LEAD Maryland Foundation (LEAD) serves Maryland's rural sector. LEAD works to increase the numbers and capacity of leaders serving agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities. Through program participation LEAD Fellows become more equipped to solve problems, identify resources, engage and educate others, and to influence public policy important to Maryland's rural sector. LEAD provides training to its target audience using teams of volunteers teaching, training, speaking, managing LEAD sessions, providing tours, serving on panel presentations, and otherwise hosting LEAD seminars.

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

MAERDAF grant monies were used in the implementation of seminars for Fellows in LEAD Class IX (2015-2016) to purchase meeting/conference space, hotel rooms, meals, professional trainers and instructors, and teaching materials for Seminars I, II, and III.

LOWER SHORE LAND TRUST: \$7,054

This project facilitated outreach and education to landowners and local and regional farm agencies with the intent to increase awareness and the benefits of land protection and conservation programs while also prioritizing important lands for conservation. The grant award provided a significant opportunity for the Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT) to heighten the visibility of the organization. The LSLT developed and printed surveys to determine priorities around the lower shore and conducted a landowner workshop covering restoration, best management practices, and land protection.

MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: \$2,500

MAERDAF grant funding was used for the facility rental (lodging) for students and advisors at the Maryland State Envirothon held at St. Mary's College in Southern Maryland. The Envirothon is a fun and exciting way for high school students in grades nine through 12 to learn about the natural world around us. Envirothon teams are made up of five students and study Maryland's natural resources over the course of the school year. In 2015, 19 of 23 counties held an Envirothon event. Over 1,100 students statewide participated in the Envirothon.

OFF STREET SPORTS PERFORMANCE: \$15,000

Off Street Sports Performance (OSSP) works with at-risk, aspiring youth athletes. The organization serves over 200 youth between the ages of seven and 18 living in Wicomico, Somerset and

Worcester counties. The funding from the MAERDAF grant allowed OSSP to purchase a used nine-passenger 2008 Chevy Suburban. This vehicle allows trainers to transport youth and equipment to additional locations thereby increasing the number of at-risk youth athlete participants.

HEART OF THE CIVIL WAR HERITAGE AREA: \$15,500

Grant funding allowed the organization to pilot the "Inn-vasion" tour of Civil War heritage sites in Western Maryland. Materials created included a logo, website and marketing postcards. Several new partnerships with local inns were established.

WARD MUSEUM OF WILDFOWL ART: \$12,795

Grant funds were used to equip the new Oristano Meeting Room at the Museum. Technologies purchased and installed using MAERDAF funds included an 80" LED TV, document camera, AV switcher, Wi-Fi access, Blu-ray player, and dynamic LED lights. This expanded facility allows the Ward Museum to host large grade-wide field trips for the first time. It will also be available to support room requests from community members and groups.

WESTERN MARYLAND RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: \$4,882

MAERDAF grant funds were used to further the agricultural training programs offered through the Frostburg Grows project. This project involves the conversion of unused, mined land to an innovative five-acre greenhouse and shade house complex designed to train community members for high quality jobs while producing local food and tree seedlings. Specifically, grant funds were used to purchase soil and water testing

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

equipment, a soil moisture meter, flow meters for irrigation, a refractometer, chemilizer, drippers, drip tape, regulators, manifolds, a heat mat with controller and a shade cloth. This equipment will enhance training on important skills to help growers be efficient, understand soil conditions, monitor for any changes in soils such as build-up of salts due to fertilizing, take accurate measurements of water used for irrigation and fertilizer used for nutrition, test the quality and sugar content of fruit and more. These skills will increase success of local food growers using the high tunnel and season extension methods that are taught and demonstrated at Frostburg Grows.

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN: \$4,908

In following the goal to provide nutritional education to survivors, Women Supporting Women created a healthy lifestyle program designed to help change the way survivors approached healthy food selection and preparation. This objective was met in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 through a series of four

cooking classes using simple recipes with produce purchased from organic, local farmers' markets. Class topics in the series included detoxification, healthy weight, energy building and immune support. Two consultants researched recipes, planned menus, and provided cooking demonstrations on the preparation of foods for each class topic. At the beginning of each class notebooks with menu recipes were provided for each participant. The guiding principle of these sessions was to offer feasible, attractive and nourishing options in both food and experience. The first series of classes was conducted fall 2014 in Wicomico County at Shore Appliance Connection in Salisbury, Maryland on Saturdays, and in Worcester County on Monday nights at Worcester Youth & Family Counseling Services in Berlin, Maryland. The second series of classes was promoted and available spring 2015 in Somerset County at Go-Getters in Princess Anne, Maryland on Thursdays and in Wicomico County at Shore Appliance Connection in Salisbury, Maryland on Saturdays.



Evergreen Heritage Center STEM Pavilion

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) and the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) agreed to partner together on a pilot youth engagement project in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties. This project was envisioned to provide the tools and framework necessary for our communities to engage young people and keep them rooted in our rural areas.

Recovery of our State's rural areas depends upon engaging young people to not only stem their flow from rural areas, but also to invest in the future. For decades, individuals ages 18 to 35 have left our rural communities. The good news is that many would stay if there were viable career opportunities available. Most believe that their rural communities would be a great place to raise their own families; however, actions must be taken to ensure that young people have tangible opportunities to invest in their hometowns as places that offer both a great quality of life and economic opportunities.

The RMC and the Upper Shore Regional Council, through the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, conducted several webinars to discuss the project and engage local leaders. We conducted a web-based survey administered with the assistance of local schools. The survey explored the students' plans for the future with a special focus on perceptions about their home communities, business ownership, and career interests. We also conducted youth focus groups through the counties to identify themes that appeared in the survey and to ask for youth input on ideal amenities their future homes should offer. We then hosted three town halls, one in each county, to engage the community, assess current assets, and to identify strategies to recruit and retain youth.

In the fall 2014 semester, 2,512 sixth through 12th grade students in Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties participated in an online survey to measure their perceptions of their community, future education and career plans, and desire to live in the local area in the future. The survey was administered in classroom environments with teacher supervision.

High school students constituted 26% of total respondents, with 11% being juniors and seniors. 74% of survey respondents were middle school students. Overall, females represented 49.8% and males 50.2% of total survey participants.



Cecil County Town Hall, December 8, 2014

The youth focus groups included over 140 representative middle school and high school students from Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties involved in student leadership roles, or enrolled in technology or vocational programs. The focus group participants worked in small groups of four to eight students to discuss their current likes and dislikes regarding their communities, and their vision for what they wanted their communities to be like in 10 years if they were to stay or return as young adults.

More information on survey results can be found at youthdashboard.com.

RURAL ASPIRATIONS

In the fall of 2014, the Rural Maryland Foundation traveled around the State asking rural residents their aspirations for their communities. Over four days, we asked Marylanders one simple question: “What do you aspire for rural Maryland?” Their answers were genuine and unscripted. We put together the results in a short video called “*Rural Aspirations*.”



Screen shot from Rural Aspirations

The video is available to view at the Foundation’s webpage: www.ruralmdfoundation.org or on the Foundation’s YouTube channel. We invite all Marylanders to share their aspirations by taking a brief survey at ruralmdaspirations.com.

The Rural Maryland Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization formed in 2001 to support the work of the Rural Maryland Council. All contributions to the Foundation are tax deductible and may be sent to: Rural Maryland Foundation, Post Office Box 1544, Annapolis, Maryland 21404. More information on the Foundation can be found at: ruralmdfoundation.org.

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RMC Chair Scott Warner with Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford



Cucumber Harvest, Preston, Maryland